

CHAPTER 2

What is the Purpose and Need of the Project?

In 2002, the Washington State Department of Transportation prepared an environmental impact statement (EIS) providing a corridor-wide review of a range of transportation improvement alternatives for I-405. That process led to the selection of an alternative that has become the I-405 Corridor Program. As part of the I-405 Corridor Program, the Kirkland Nickel Project proposes a focused strategy on improving the section of the corridor between SR 520 in Kirkland and SR 522 in Bothell.

Why do we need the Kirkland Nickel Project?

Our region needs the Kirkland Nickel Project to improve personal and freight mobility and to reduce traffic congestion in ways that are safe and reliable. Anyone who has traveled on I-405 through Kirkland already knows how congested this stretch of road has become. On an average morning, motorists and transit users currently experience southbound traffic congestion between 6:00 and 9:00 AM. Likewise, on a typical afternoon, they experience traffic congestion heading northbound beginning by 3:00 PM and lasting for several hours into the evening.

What is the I-405 Corridor Program and how does the Kirkland Nickel Project relate to it?

The I-405 Corridor Program was created as a comprehensive strategy to reduce congestion and improve mobility throughout the I-405 Corridor, which begins at the I-5 interchange in the City of Tukwila and extends northward 30 miles to the I-5 interchange in Lynnwood. Its purpose is to provide an efficient, integrated, and multimodal system of transportation solutions that:

- Maintains or enhances livable communities within the corridor;



Traffic on I-405

What is congestion?

Congestion occurs when vehicles on the freeway move at an average speed of 45 miles per hour or less, and the flow of traffic is often stop and go.

- Maintains or improves air quality, protects or enhances fish-bearing streams, and promotes regional environmental values such as continued integrity of the natural environment;
- Supports a vigorous state and regional economy by responding to existing and future travel needs; and
- Accommodates planned regional growth.

As part of the overall I-405 Corridor Program, the Kirkland Nickel Project proposes to make access and mobility improvements to the section of roadway between SR 520 in Kirkland and SR 522 in Bothell (see Exhibit 2-1; also see Exhibit 4-2 on pages 4-6 to 4-16 in Chapter 4).

What happens if the Kirkland Nickel Project is not built?

Currently the average daily traffic volume on I-405 in Kirkland is 191,000 vehicles per day. By year 2014 our transportation models predict 211,000 vehicles per day. If the project is not built, the increase of 20,000 vehicles per day could lengthen both morning and evening peak period congestion by as much as two hours.

What other improvements are being implemented as part of the region's transportation planning process?

Improvements along I-405, as well as those on SR 520, I-90, and SR 522, are included in WSDOT's *Highway System Plan* (WSDOT, May 18, 2004), which forecasts transportation needs for the next 20 years. *Destination 2030* (PSRC, May 24, 2001; revised May 22, 2003) is the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Central Puget Sound region and defines the transportation action plan for the next 30 years. The Kirkland Nickel Project is included in *Destination 2030*. The Kirkland Nickel Project is also consistent with the transportation plans for the cities of Kirkland and Bothell.

Exhibit 2-1
Project Vicinity



